

Security without the United States?

Europe's Perception of NATO

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FOR NEARLY 60 years, Europe has benefitted from America's willingness to view European security as part of its own and to extend the umbrella of "extended nuclear deterrence" over it. During the Cold War, it was the United States above all that prevented war in Europe, in particular in the form of a nuclear first strike, which the Soviet Union had planned. After the end of the Cold War, it was again the United States that restored peace in Europe when it decided, working within a NATO framework, to put an end to the Yugoslavian wars of secession and to lay the groundwork for the peaceful reordering of post-Soviet Europe by means of NATO expansion and the Partnership for Peace program.

This "Pax Americana" in Europe broke down after the United States began its war on terror following the attacks of 11 September 2001. This prompted anew the question that had already arisen once, at the end of the Cold War, about the future of NATO and about Europe's security without US involvement. This same question arises again with the arrival in office of the new Obama administration, for, in spite of the likely return to multilateral foreign and security policies, it cannot be ruled out that President Obama, like George W. Bush, will look upon European issues as largely settled and perceive his primary interests as lying in the Middle East and Asia. The question as to whether or not European security is possible without the United States is one that must be addressed on both sides of the Atlantic. An answer requires that we first examine the situation in

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Europe in 2009 so that we may then determine how Europe's security can be safeguarded before we can decide whether this can succeed without US involvement and what NATO's role in it will be.

The Situation

Even prior to the startling developments beginning in August of 2008—first in the Caucasus, then on the world's financial markets, and at year's end in the Middle East—the world was already in a process of ongoing transformation triggered by dramatic changes and with effects that touched on all aspects of life, crossing not just borders but whole continents. The more or less stable world order of the Cold War no longer exists, but many old conflicts remain unresolved. One need only consider the flare-up that occurred in August 2008 in Georgia, part of that powder keg known as the Caucasus; or the problems of the Middle East; or those at Europe's front door in the Balkans. While there is much talk of a multi-polar world, no one has yet explained how to go about achieving stability within such an order. Still, there is one bit of good news: The chance of a major war in Europe, the battlefield of innumerable wars over the course of 300 years, can in general be ruled out.

Starting in October of 2008, however, the world now understands that, in addition to acute regional crises, global crises can develop with the suddenness of tsunamis. The global financial crisis brought the world to the edge of the abyss, and we are by no means out of danger yet. It is clearer now just how quickly we can lose control of events, with the result that crises in financial markets can turn into crises of state authority and democratic legitimacy. Sadly—and this is the bad, though not surprising, news—it is possible that there could be more crises of this dimension in the future, because the world faces still more global changes, often dramatic in kind.

To answer the question of whether Europe can provide for its own security without the aid of the United States, we must first take a look at long-term developments, for in facing current crises one can only turn to the means at hand, namely NATO and the European Union.

Four Long-Term Crises

We can discern four long-term developments that can perhaps lead to crises and conflict: demographic displacements, shortages of essential

resources, revolutionary advances in industrialization and technology, and climate change.

A dramatic and well-appreciated but politically neglected change can be found in the demographic shifts occurring globally. These will expose European societies to tremendous pressure. Europe's population is shrinking and growing increasingly older, so that by the year 2050 its people will have an average age of 50. Meanwhile, the North American population will increase while remaining at the average age of 37. The decline in Russia's population to perhaps less than 100 million will be even more dramatic and may accelerate through the spread of AIDS and tuberculosis. The roughly six million ethnic Russians now living in the sparsely populated but resource-rich parts of Siberia will look on helplessly as approximately four million illegal Chinese immigrants continue to increase in number.

India will soon be the most populated country in Asia and, at one and the same time, home to more academics than any other country but also to the greatest number of illiterates. China will face a disproportionate number of elderly and will struggle with the effects of the "one-child policy" while also trying to come to terms with more than 150 million jobless, 200 million migrant workers—some of whom were recently laid off—and unimaginable environmental degradation and rapidly increasing urbanization.

Only Africa (despite war and AIDS), the Arab world, and South America will see population growth occurring together with a decline in average age. This could produce waves of immigration that primarily impact Europe. These developments are no longer reversible. They will produce tensions worldwide, but in particular in Europe, where many European countries will be forced to open their borders to new immigrants to support their underfinanced social welfare systems.

The second development is the scarcity of essential resources. Bloody conflicts over raw materials that are by no means essential in nature yet which serve as indispensable means of profit maximization can produce strife like that in the Congo, where the rivalry between Tutsi and Hutu merely cloaks a struggle over "coltan" (columbite-tantalite) and similar raw materials. The competition for resources in increasingly shorter supply—foremost among them water, gas, and oil—will intensify, leading to more conflict, stemming at least in part from Europe's, India's, and China's needs for secure energy imports essential to their survival. Europe will not be able to meet its energy needs through renewables, even where

it has wisely retained nuclear power. And even if it were to put an end to the wasteful use of oil, Europe would still remain more dependent on foreign sources than the United States, where new technologies and the exploitation of untapped potential make for less vulnerability to extortion by foreign energy suppliers. Globally, the struggle for water will be the primary source of conflict in the future, since at present 40 percent of mankind gets its water from extraterritorial sources.

The third trend has to do with the need resulting from advancing technological change to move labor-intensive production and services to lower-cost countries outside the industrialized world. It will lead, on the one hand, to further stresses on labor markets and social welfare structures and, on the other, to increased competition for young, highly qualified workers. Europe, North America, and Japan will be able to maintain their position in the high-value markets for the time being, though only at the price of considerable changes in industrial structures and steadily rising qualification requirements demanded of their workforces. The unequal distribution of the world's riches, with all the potential for conflict it entails, also will not change, despite a possible threefold increase in the GDPs of both India and China.

Climate change and environmental stresses constitute the fourth trend that can also act as sources of crisis and conflict. One example can be found in Darfur, where climate change rather than ethnic or religious issues has likely led to what might be called the world's first climate war. And if the prognoses about global warming prove true, we are likely to see more conflicts of this sort. Other conflicts will occur in those places where environmental contamination has led to water shortages. As is often the case, the weak living in these places will turn to terrorism, and international organized crime, including piracy, will blossom. In addition, there will continue to be conflicts between states over such unresolved issues as the dispute between Russia and Norway over the oil-rich continental shelf off the coast of Spitsbergen or the question about how to administer new sea routes through a potentially ice-free Arctic Ocean.

These four phenomena will alter the internal makeup of most societies, though obviously to differing degrees, and will lead to various forms of antagonism up to and including armed conflict. They could even compel changes in the fundamental structures of government as it becomes clearer that problems can no longer be addressed within the narrow confines of individual ministries or departments—or even at the national level.

Increased international cooperation will be necessary. While the tendency of countries to act on their own continues to grow for the time being, the ability to shape events at that level is shrinking.

Europe will experience these changes firsthand—even more so than the other primary actors on the world stage such as the United States, Russia, China, India, or Japan—because it lies closer than any of them to the key region in world affairs for the foreseeable future: the greater Middle East, that region where all the previously mentioned trends come together and on which Europe is more dependent than any other of the world's major players. Conflicts in proximity to Europe are, therefore, practically unavoidable. They could arise from

- clashes over access to and possession of existential resources such as water, food, energy, and health care;
- migration triggered by the effects of climate change;
- traditional causes of conflict aggravated by the new sources of contention, such as unresolved territorial claims, membership in different ethnic or tribal groups, inequitable distribution of political power, or religious tensions; or
- crumbling state authority in a world in which nonstate actors gain increased access to instruments of power not subject to either supervision or control.

Newly burgeoning militant ideologies could aggravate these sources of conflict through the use of agitation spread by new global means of communication.

Future conflicts will often be characterized by simultaneous actions taken by both state and nonstate actors, with the latter increasingly assuming the full power potential of states. The states' monopoly on power will be shattered, and nonstate actors will be freer to act without regard to law or moral norms while states acting in their own defense will remain bound by those norms.

Many future conflicts will begin internally, at the local level. Some may initially be conventional wars, and most will be conducted “amongst the people.” Many of these conflicts will quickly take on regional or even global significance. Governments will be increasingly willing, even compelled, to act preventatively to contain these conflicts at a distance from their own

borders, while their publics will be ever less prepared to appreciate the need for or to lend their support to such actions for long periods of time.

The twenty-first century will be an unsettled century; one in which, in addition to the more familiar wars between states, there will also be new forms of violence such as cyber war and contests between transnational forces and traditional state authority. At the outset it clearly will prove a world lacking any sort of global order. This is due in part to the fact that the Pax Americana has lost much of its meaning in Europe and never took hold in the Middle East (though it still remains irreplaceable there). Only in the Pacific region does it retain its role as a central, stabilizing factor.

In searching for a new organizing principle, the world will only slowly begin to appreciate that no single state, not even the most powerful, can protect its people on its own. Everyone understands that neither military means alone nor the pacifistic rejection of those means can secure peace. The future belongs to international organizations, even though the earth's powerful find it difficult to allow the weaker to exercise influence in those fora or to make decisions in concert with them. On the other hand, the world's weak find it hard to surrender sovereignty as well.

There are two additional sources of danger that must be considered: nuclear proliferation and cyber operations. Between now and the year 2050, the world will experience a renaissance in nuclear power generation, with up to 1,400 new nuclear plants added to the grid, possessing the potential to produce nuclear weapons as a by-product. New initiatives toward a reduction in nuclear weapons are imperative but will only work if the United States takes the lead.

Another new threat, one that strengthens both terrorism and organized criminality, arises out of the increased use of cyber war by both state and nonstate actors. Cyber war brings with it a paradigm shift in strategy, with the emphasis moving away from the direct destruction of the opponent and toward the strategic, potentially preemptive immobilization of its sources of power. The developments here are breathtaking. In 2000, four gigabits-per-second (gbps) could be directed at immobilizing a system, but only nine years later, that figure has increased to 16 gbps. One should therefore not only examine closely the cyber attack on Estonia in 2007, but also stop to ponder the opportunities this development opens up to organized crime. With its growing "turnover" of \$2–3 billion (US) per year, organized crime can devote great sums to the use of the most up-to-date technologies.

All the various sources and forms of conflict must be countered with a suitable security architecture. But this can only be effective if those states that are part of it demonstrate both the will to act and the readiness to employ all the means at their disposal. Above all, however—and this is the decisive criterion for determining whether or not Europe can get by without the United States—future conflict management will require the capability to act globally.

Current Crises

The world's states, including Germany, must deal with existing crises, employing currently available means to do so. These cannot be effective, however, without the United States. For that reason, European security will continue to be dependent upon the United States over the short to middle term.

Many of today's conflicts demand action within Europe or at its peripheries. There are, for example, the issues still outstanding in the Balkans and in the Caucasus or the critical matters of the Middle East. Extension of diplomatic recognition by the United States and some EU members may have influenced Russia's decision with regard to the crisis in Georgia. And diplomatic recognition clearly was the cause of unrest in the Balkans, where many of those living in that artificial construct called "Bosnia-Herzegovina" now dream of independence, foremost among them those in the "Republic of Srpska." Not a few of them would be ready to take up arms again on behalf of the cause of independence. Europe must therefore remain engaged in the Balkans and search for ways to bring about a lasting resolution to the conflict through the integration of Serbia into the European Union.

However, the most pressing matter has to do with stability in the greater Middle East, the key region in world affairs for the foreseeable future. None of the questions facing us there can be viewed in isolation.

Perhaps the easiest to deal with is Iraq, where it appears that something like partial, albeit fragile, stability has been achieved. Even so, the period since 2003 has seen a fundamental shift in power relationships in the region. Alongside traditional states, a complex, little-understood actor has entered the scene: political Islam. Meanwhile, the political center of the region now lies in the Persian Gulf with its rival parties, Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Proposals made with respect to the region are only viable when backed by the United States. This applies in particular to Iran. There is still a

chance—perhaps the last—of reaching a peaceful resolution to the conflict over the Iranian nuclear program. Contrary to all its claims, Iran is undoubtedly pursuing a nuclear weapons program. The possession of nuclear weapons is by no means a goal pursued only by the current Iranian president. It has been a goal of Iran's leaders since the time of the shah. Iran might already be in a position to cross the threshold to construction of a nuclear weapon. The enrichment of existing stockpiles of reactor fuel into weapons-grade HEU (highly enriched uranium) could soon begin. And from that point, it is only a matter of months until Iran is in possession of an atomic weapon, even if at first only a rather primitive one. Iran already has the necessary delivery vehicle, capable of reaching Israel and even parts of Eastern Europe.

This has set off alarms in Israel, where even a single bomb poses an existential threat. Given the threats of annihilation coming from President Ahmadinejad, no Israeli government will stand idly by in light of these developments. Only the United States can prevent Israel from taking unilateral action. Efforts to bring the situation under control can only succeed, however, if Russia and China abandon their occasional support for Iran and instead act to block Iran's efforts by giving their full backing to the demands of the UN Security Council, and if the UN passes new, more stringent sanctions, implemented by all parties. If the United States were then to present Iran with a new package of security guarantees, along with political and economic incentives and a comprehensive set of proposals for Middle East peace, there might be a chance for a face-saving resolution of the issue. This has been made much more difficult, however, by the recent violent conflict in Gaza, where neither Hamas nor its financial backers in Tehran appear to have an interest in a lasting settlement to the conflict. Terrorist organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah thrive on conflict and have no scruples about using those subject to their authority as hostages. Those who protest against Israel, though well-intentioned, unknowingly make themselves accomplices to the radical elements in the Islamic world, just as do those segments of the media that stir up fears of a conflagration in the Near East.

This crisis at Europe's doorstep demonstrates that only the United States, not Europe, can achieve a lasting peace settlement. The issue is urgent, for it is clear that the Israelis will not stand idly by until Iran has a nuclear weapon with which it can realize its threats. The crisis has a global dimension as well: If it is not possible to halt Iran at the threshold

of becoming a virtual nuclear power, then the relatively stable world held in place by the nuclear nonproliferation accord, with its five declared and three undeclared nuclear states, could be at an end. A consequence of Iran obtaining a nuclear bomb could be the nuclear arming of states like Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt, and perhaps Turkey as well. The result would be a highly unstable world in which the consequences following from the construction of 1,400 new nuclear plants by 2050 could no longer be contained, a world in which one could no longer completely rule out the use of nuclear weapons by one of what might by then be an abundance of nuclear weapon states. This is the global dimension of the Iranian crisis and demonstrates that a solution must take precedence over everyday business interests.

Afghanistan must also be addressed without delay. While the struggle for control continues, hunger and violence are common, including in the north of the country. After six years of selective improvements across the country but with no clear progress toward betterment of their living conditions, the Afghan people are dissatisfied. They increasingly see foreigners as occupiers. The Taliban, of whom presumably less than 10 percent are dedicated fanatics, enjoy growing popularity. And the instability in neighboring Pakistan provides them with an ideal sanctuary in the tribal areas along the border. Simply sending in more NATO troops cannot be the solution. The problem is political in nature. The Afghans see a "strong" central government as something foreign, not their own, imposed on them from the outside. And the unchecked vicious circle made up of the drug trade, corruption, and arms dealing generates insecurity, weakens a central government plagued by corruption, drives the country ever more into the hands of rival warlords, and provides the Taliban with the money to finance its followers.

Current strategy must therefore be reviewed. A viable strategy should build on past successes and, coupled with a counterinsurgency strategy, should be oriented fundamentally around reconstruction. Its goal would be to work jointly with moderate elements to establish an Afghan order based on strengthened security organs (military and police) that could break the vicious cycle of criminality made up of the drug trade, corruption, and the arming of warlords. This could then help produce a widening zone of stability in which the country's security could gradually be turned over to the Afghans themselves while simultaneously pursuing the reconstruction efforts in the country. Discussion about networked security

will not suffice. We must work together with our allies, even though this may pose certain risks. There can be no separate solutions for different parts of Afghanistan—one for the north of the country and another for the south. Afghanistan will be won or lost as a whole, but it must not be lost, since that would only open it up as a new breeding ground for terrorism. Moreover, Afghanistan has become a regional problem that will require the involvement of Pakistan, Iran, and India. Europe also must play a part—especially as we recall that it was Germany which, in 2002, asked that Afghanistan be made a NATO operation.

Afghanistan can still become a success. But attempting to “stay the course” there would only pave the way to ruin—not to military defeat, but to a political defeat for the Western powers, which would produce a destabilizing influence far beyond the region.

If it were possible to bring about a settlement in Iran and Afghanistan, and if the current shaky peace were to hold in Iraq, then it might be possible to shape a peaceful resolution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Achieving this has been made more difficult by the recent conflict in Gaza, where Hamas used the power of images to obscure the fact that it was the primary source of the troubles there. Israel may have successfully restored its deterrent capacity, but the fundamentalists in the Arab world emerged strengthened.

A resolution to the conflict will require American leadership and European involvement. Above all it will require prompt action, since any solution will surely occupy the first full term of the new president—and because Israel is running out of time demographically. If the Iran crisis were successfully diffused, then the United States could bring into the process the new government of Israel as well as Saudi Arabia. Syria would be ready to negotiate because without Iran it would need compensation and because Hezbollah would be so weakened without Iranian backing that Syria could be more flexible in Lebanon. Through a settlement of the Iran question, Hamas, too, would lose its sponsors. Then the United States could put pressure on Israel and Syria and encourage the Saudis to get the Palestinians to accommodate. Coordinated pressure from Washington and Riyadh could lead to the first tangible steps toward a two-state solution and real hope for peace between Israel and the new Palestinian state.

But, in addition to immediate crises, one must also examine the short- and midterm developments in Asia as well as relations with Russia to determine whether security for Europe is possible without the aid of the

United States. There is no need for any sort of short-term action in Asia, the sole area of the world where the Pax Americana still serves as guarantor of relative stability. Negotiations continue with respect to the most threatening issue there, North Korea. There appears to be little likelihood of conflict over Taiwan for the foreseeable future, as the two sides continue talking. China, which over the midterm will possess no appreciable means of power projection, will seek to keep the United States engaged in the region to gain the political breathing room it needs to deal with its internal problems while pursuing economic expansion. China needs free access to the American market. Economically, China and the United States are in a symbiotic relationship, and for that reason China has no choice but to seek cooperation over the short to middle term. China needs the United States in the Pacific to enforce order; only then can it realize its long-term interests.

Relations with Russia are more troubled. There is no danger of armed conflict with NATO; Russia is militarily too weak for that. It also poses no threat to any of the individual NATO states so long as NATO remains united and retains a credible capability for collective defense. This, however, is only possible together with the United States. The autonomous European defense of EU territory is not doable over either the short or the long term.

The problem with Russia is psychological in nature. The actions of Putin's Russia flow from a feeling of wounded pride. Russia would like to be the world's number two power, and its leaders believe they can act from a position of strength. However, Russia is actually quite weak because

- it can only export weapons and raw materials (the latter only beyond 2011) if the West helps modernize its production and transport infrastructures;
- it finds itself in a significant though unacknowledged economic crisis that could be worsened by falling oil prices;
- military reform has failed; and
- it is facing a demographic catastrophe that will result in even fewer Russians living on the country's most vulnerable borders.

Yet Moscow believes itself to be strong, which explains the somewhat ill-considered actions taken since the summer of 2008—its disproportionate use

of force in Georgia, its recognition of the breakaway provinces, Medvedev's imprudent announcement regarding the stationing of new missiles in Kaliningrad coinciding with the US elections, and the renewed threats to cut off natural gas supplies in January 2009—which were clearly an attempt to hinder the Ukraine in its turn toward the West and to demonstrate to Europe that it had best back away from EU and NATO expansion. One of the abiding problems of European security lies in making sure that the American commitment there remains credible while also seeking a cooperative relationship with Russia without conceding to it a *droit de regard*. Europe can play a helpful role in this respect, though not as go-between; for that, it is not powerful enough and is too divided. But Europe could make clear to the new US president that a great deal of patience is required in dealing with Russia and that one must be guided by the knowledge that the weaker party in any exchange cannot be expected to accept one-sided decisions which it subjectively perceives as dishonorable and that one must instead actively engage with it and offer a helping hand in pursuit of a shared vision.

So much for existing crises. One might add to the list the ongoing wars in Africa and the tensions in South America, but the question at hand has to do with European security without the United States, and neither Africa nor South America poses a direct threat to Europe, even though the economic consequences of the continuing conflicts there could be serious.

European Security without the United States?

Europe is politically disunited and deeply divided over security policy. But while the European Union has been plunged into a serious crisis by the vote of four million Irish against the proposed EU constitution, the EU still possesses one great advantage: It has at its disposal all the political means—the full spectrum of instruments—needed for an effective security policy. And yet it suffers from two serious deficiencies:

- It lacks the will to act quickly, decisively, and firmly when necessary.
- Its military capabilities are inadequate. They are insufficient to protect the EU zone from current threats, let alone meaningfully project power beyond its borders. However, this latter capability is precisely what Europe needs, because the mid- to longer-term threats require a global reach, not merely the capability to respond retroactively to

threats but rather the ability to actively engage with threats wherever they arise.

No one seriously doubts that Europe cannot provide for its own security. Placing hopes in the United Nations or the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is illusory. The tried-and-true Cold War-era method of “outsourcing” security to the United States is no longer viable, not least because America’s role in the world has changed. Since 2001, the United States has lost a great deal of its former credibility. Plus, the United States sees itself in a protracted war against global terrorism, which it is determined to win.

For the time being, then, Europe is left with no better option than to seek security in NATO. However, for that to work, the alliance must be fundamentally remodeled. Through extensive cooperation with the EU, the alliance can be put in a position to shape networked security. Using this structure, Europe could develop over the long term its own capabilities for limited operations outside Europe, whether carried out within the NATO framework or as independent EU operations. This also accords with the commitments made in the Prague Capability Commitment, the Headline Force Goals 2010, and the European Capability Action Plan, but which thus far have been given nothing more than lip service. Europe must also alter its perception of NATO. NATO will remain the guarantor for the collective defense of alliance territory, but it cannot be satisfied with that. On the other hand, the alliance should not be made into a global actor. NATO must be refashioned in accordance with a duly expanded concept of security. For that it needs a new “grand strategy,” one that incorporates all the instruments of crisis management including, above all, nonmilitary components, and which seeks cooperation with other organizations, especially the EU, in directing all of its efforts toward the prevention of armed conflict. The means appropriate to this strategy must then be established. The goal here should be to expend available funding for the armed forces in such a way that the NATO states can defend their interests and their populations through a combination of active and reactive defense and yet also be in a position to act wherever necessary within the framework of the UN and NATO to defend against threats outside the NATO area.

Most European armed forces, including existing defense projects, must be reexamined, since many of them—born in the Cold War—strain public finances while hindering needed modernization in key capabilities such as information predominance. Europeans would be well advised to work in

cooperation with the United States to develop, acquire, and jointly operate a series of core capabilities, so-called strategic enablers. These include satellites for reconnaissance, navigation, and telecommunication; unmanned reconnaissance aircraft; unmanned armed drones; missile defense systems; electronic war-fighting capacities; and truly strategic air- and sea-transport capabilities. If Europe had an efficient arms industry of its own (which does not necessarily imply independent European production where off-the-shelf equipment can be had more cheaply), then it would be possible to develop a European military capacity that could place Europe in a position to engage in future joint operations together with the Americans and to a limited degree to operate independently outside of Europe, assuming that it is prepared to make the requisite political commitments. If Europe were to take the necessary steps to assemble a European police force, a European catastrophe relief corps, and an EU development assistance corps, then it would possess the capacities for limited global action. Europe would still not be able to stand toe-to-toe with the United States, but it would be a much more sought-after security partner, preventing others from making decisions without first getting Europe's views. This should be Europe's goal. Moreover, this would be the right thing to do from America's perspective as well, because a stable Europe closely allied with the United States would expand the power of the United States to act.

Conclusion

For the time being there can be no security for Europe without the United States. As the expression of the US treaty obligation to, in cooperation with the Europeans, provide for the security of the area between Vancouver and Brest-Litovsk, NATO must remain intact and be further developed. It is necessary to preserve the tried and tested—like collective defense and the real glue of the alliance: the equitable distribution of risks and burdens—while working to fashion the alliance anew.

What is needed is a vision of an alliance based on shared values and convictions between the states of Europe and of North America in which all are prepared to work together to protect themselves against all nature of dangers without seeking to impose on anyone their social order or to spread their religion. It should be an alliance that seeks cooperation with other countries and religions and that works together with its partners and others to build, in cooperation with Russia, a zone of security extending

from Finland to Alaska, which may then serve as the foundation for a future zone of security that stretches from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

This would be a sound basis for comprehensive collaboration between Europe and the United States in confronting the global problems of our time: the effort to reverse global warming; the campaign against hunger and lack of water; and the struggle against disease and pandemics. **SSQ**